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Tim's Tactics

By CECILIA A. LOIZEAUX

It all began when Mr. Jones-Brown brought Tim home one evening and laid the dog in the open arms of his pretty wife. She received him enthusiastically and bought him an elaborate collar. He was a cute dog. Even Mrs. Robinson-Smith, who lived next door and hated dogs, admitted that—that is, she said he wasn't bad for a mongrel. And it must be admitted right here that the dog wasn't of any particular breed; he was just a dog.

He was soon in high favor in the neighborhood, especially with the Robinson-Smiths, who were intimate friends of the Jones-Browns. Both couples were newly married, and during the day while their husbands were in the city the young wives sewed, talked and called together.

But to come back to the dog. In time he passed the stage of puppy fireworks and was old enough to know better. Then Mrs. Jones-Brown's sister came to visit her. And during the same week Mrs. Robinson-Smith had a card from her nephew that he was coming down to spend a month with her. He was nearly as old as his aunt, who admitted that he was called a "catch" in town.

The expected guests arrived almost simultaneously—Ethel Herriot with a large trunk and Jack Marvin with divers battered suit cases. They were duly ensconced with their respective relatives, and then the trouble began. On the second evening Mr. and Mrs. Robinson-Smith trailed their nephew across the lawn to call on their nearest neighbor. The two young people were introduced. Ethel, as Mrs. Jones-Brown afterward said, was unnecessarily embarrassed for a girl who had been three seasons "out."

In the horribly irritating way of young married people the neighborly quartet immediately began to talk of domestic affairs, leaving Jack and Ethel to take care of themselves. They did not notice that there was an awful silence, during which Ethel was threatened with mental hysteria and was saved only by Tim, the thoughtful, who opportunely appeared and jumped into her lap. She began to talk to him, and the day was saved—temporarily. Still patting the dog, Ethel finally said to the man:

"Why did you follow me out here?"

"I didn't follow you," said Jack promptly. "If I had known that you were in this neck of woods you don't suppose I'd have disturbed it, do you?" Then he added, "Why did you come to stay next door to my aunt?"

"How was I to know you had an aunt out here?" Ethel asked indignantly.

"Well," said Jack, "I guess we're both innocent, so we need not quarrel over that."

Then there was another silence. Tim jumped down from Ethel's lap and leaped into Jack's. Jack grinned.

"Nice doggie!" he chuckled, petting him effusively. Ethel knew he hated small dogs. She tried to think of something crushing to say, but before the words came Mr. and Mrs. Robinson-Smith rose and said good night, and their dutiful nephew rose with them. He put out his hand, and Ethel was forced to let hers touch it for an instant, while he said:

"So glad I've met you, Miss Herriot. It's awfully jolly that we know so many of the same people."

Ethel smiled, though her eyes were blazing wrathfully.

"Isn't it?" she said. "Good night."

When Mrs. Jones-Brown turned to speak to her sister she found the girl's chair empty and a moment after heard her ascending the stairs.

Late that night Ethel rose, lit the lamp and took from her trunk a package of letters, which she sat down to read. Long before she had finished them she was crying softly, and when she did go to bed again it was to lie wide eyed and staring till nearly morning. She was awakened by Tim, who was licking her hand. She patted his head.

"Naughty Tim! Did the missus let you in?"

Rising on her elbow, she saw that the door was ajar and supposed that her sister had sent the dog to wake her.

Tim seemed full of spirits of puppyhood this morning. He would worry the bedclothes with his teeth, dash wildly across the room to catch some unseen thing and then rush back upon her, frantic with delight.

Ethel lay staring at the ceiling. Her head ached, and she felt utterly miserable. She wondered how she could get away from her sister's house and that man next door. Tim, finding himself unwatched, worried awhile at something he found on the floor beneath the table, then took it in his mouth and ran off with it.

"If he only wasn't so glad," thought the girl, referring to the man, not the dog. "He shows so plainly that he's glad it's off!"

Before she got up she determined to show Jack that he wasn't the only one who didn't care. She would treat him as a stranger, and she would flirt with him, too, and make him sorry. She descended the stairs, explained that her pale face was due to a nervous headache, for which she would try a long walk, and departed in a smart blue skirt and white shirt waist and very pretty slippers.

During this walk it was her intention to map out her campaign, and her thoughts were busy as she strolled along. Finally she climbed a high bank by the roadside, walked along the grassy ledge for awhile and then sat down on the brink of an old stone quarry. She was swinging her small French heels and throwing stones into the blue water far beneath when somebody behind her whistled a well known strain. She answered before she thought and then started, almost losing her balance, and clutched at the bank to save herself. Her face was hot, and she felt some one seize her from behind, for it had all happened too quickly for her to be frightened. Jack dragged her back and then lifted her to a sitting posture. She scrambled to her feet and faced him.

"What do you mean by sitting on the very edge of a place like that?" Jack questioned angrily. "Suppose the bank crumbled?"

She looked at him, wistfully at first, and then her glance turned wrathful as she saw nothing but anger in his face.

"I was all right until you came and frightened me."

"I whistled to let you know I was coming and you answered," he retorted.

"I presume your coming to this especial place was purely accidental, like your advent in this town?" she remarked sarcastically.

"Not quite," he confessed. "I followed you because I wanted to talk to you. Sit down and cool off."

She reflected that this was her first opportunity to make him sorry, and she sat down gracefully, while he arranged himself at her feet and searched a plot of clover for a lucky omen. She took off her white duck hat and let the wind ruffle her thick, fair hair. He looked up at her meditatively.

"You have more freckles this year than you had last," he announced.

"Yes," she agreed, "and more sense."

"I imagine your experience has taught you something," he remarked.

She sat up. This was not teaching him to be sorry.

"Ethel," he asked suddenly, "you burned all my letters, didn't you?"

"Of course I did." But her heart beat furiously as she thought of the night before.

"I supposed you had," he said. "I only wanted to make sure." He put his hand absently to the pocket of his blue serge coat. "You see, love letters after there isn't any more love are such asinine things," he explained; "just twaddle."

"Yours were rather twaddly," she admitted; "at least the ones I had. But they're burned."

Again he felt in his pocket. She saw the gesture and misinterpreted it.

"Light it if you like," she said.

"Light it? Ah, yes," said he, drawing the pipe from quite another pocket. She watched him fill it, frowning a little at the tobacco pouch, which was one she had given him. He leaned over to strike a match.

"Your bald spot is certainly much larger than it was last year," she remarked critically.

"How observing you are!" he drawled. Then he turned suddenly.

"Will you love me when I'm bald?" he sang.

"As much as I do now," she answered meaningly.

"Not as much as you did last night?" he queried.

"Last night!" she echoed, the blood rising to her face. "What are you talking about?" He turned again and took a letter from his coat pocket, holding it up where she could see the address in his writing, "Miss Ethel Herriot."

Her heart beat wildly. The envelope was worn and old looking. He drew out the sheets of thin paper. There were blisters—fresh blisters—upon them.

Ethel sat paralyzed. The tears rolled down her cheeks, and she did not try to wipe them away. Her fingers dug into the grass on either side.

"Poor old letter!" he said pityingly. "How did you escape the flames?" Then he heard a sob from Ethel. He turned. He saw the tears, and mentally he called himself a cad. He had never seen Ethel cry before.

"Ethel," he said, "I'm a brute, but I don't mean to be. I came out here to tell you that I love you better than ever and to own up that I was wrong and to ask you to take me back to your favor. Ethel," he had her in his arms now, "Ethel, dear, you do love me, don't you?"

"Take it out on Tim, dear, for it was his fault. He brought the letter and dropped it at my feet. And then I knew that you had been doing just what I've done nearly every night for a year, reading over the old letters. Ethel, aren't you glad—a little—that Tim found the letter?"

And Ethel's answer, though muffled, seemed to satisfy him. They went slowly home.

As Good as Her Word.

Old Mr. Makepeace was in a reminiscent mood. "Did I ever tell ye what mother said to me when I got up spunk enough to ask her—in words—if she'd have me?" he began, to the delight of his grandson, Fred.

"No, but something bright, I'll warrant," chuckled Fred, with a glance at the old lady, who calmly regarded them from her rocking chair by the fireplace.

"I can't recall the preliminary remarks," Mr. Makepeace continued, "and, anyway, I think they were a trifle mixed. But finally, after I'd said something about my prospects, to make it business-like, I began to think it strange she didn't say anything, and I was afraid I was getting it all wrong.

"'I'll make ye a good husband, Betty,' I said, hoping that was the right thing.

"'If I should marry you, John,' she said, and it was the first time she had opened her lips, 'I will attend to making a good husband of you.'

"And she has!" laughed old Mr. Makepeace, the corner of his eye on his wife.

DETECTIVE STORIES.

The Literary Weakness In the Novel of Crime and Detection.

I know of one good reason, and only one, which really prevents detective stories standing among the noblest forms of art. Most of the objections raised against them by the vague minded world of modern culture (probably the most vague minded world that has ever existed) are quite narrow and childish. To say that the detective tale is sensational is simply to say that it is full of feeling or is aesthetic. Aesthetic is the Greek for sensational. Sensational is the Latin for aesthetic. To say that the thrill which it gives is connected with bald and positive sin, with bald and positive death and not with any of the fine spun drawing room emotions which it is now the fashion to consider "deep," is to pay it a high compliment.

The Bible is concerned with these great plain sins and judgments. So are the great Greek dramas, so are the tragedies of the Elizabethans, so are the old ballads, and so are all men anywhere who live lives sufficiently real to have ever seen the great plain sins and judgments.

There is one good argument, as I have said, and one only, against the police mystery, and that is that police mysteries exist to destroy mystery when they have created it. A sad tale should be saddest when we finish it; a happy tale should be happiest when we finish it; a stirring tale should be most stirring at the end, a fantastic tale most fantastic at the end. But this kind of mysterious tale is not most mysterious at the end. It is then least mysterious, or, rather, not mysterious at all. Instead of making a commonplace thing mystical (the aim of all good art) the detective reverses the process and makes a mystical thing commonplace. And from this comes that one fatal weakness in the sensational novel of crime and detection, the one thing that does separate it, I am afraid, from great fiction, the fact that there is no impulse to read it again. A detective tale we have read is an empty bottle of wine, an exploded shell, a thing destroyed. The mystery of the sanity of Hamlet is alive and kicking still.—G. K. Chesterton in London News.